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SUBJECT: GUIDANCE FOR APRIL 23 UNSC CONSULTATIONS ON
MIDDLE EAST

[1](#)1. (SBU) Mission is instructed to draw from the points in para 2 below in discussing events in the Middle East during the briefing and consultations to be held Wednesday morning, April 23, in the UN Security Council.

[1](#)2. (U) Begin points:

Mr. President, given the importance of a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the region, I hope that today's discussion can demonstrate the Council's ability to deal in a fair and balanced way with this issue. With that in mind, I would like to make the following four points today with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and then turn to the situation in Lebanon.

First, achieving a peaceful, two-state solution continues to be a top priority for the United States. This week, the President will host Palestinian Authority President Abbas

at the White House, and in May, President Bush will make his second visit to the region this year to participate in the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of Israel. He plans to meet with leaders from both sides while in the region. Secretary Rice recently returned from her third visit to the region this year and National Security Advisor Hadley traveled to the region just last week. During the Secretary's trip, she held a successful trilateral meeting with Israeli Defense Minister Barak and Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Fayyad that resulted in commitments by both sides to take concrete steps on the ground, including: (1) the dismantlement of fifty roadblocks in the West Bank, (2) improved security coordination, and (3) increased steps by the Palestinian Authority to uphold law and order and combat terrorism. Fulfillment of these pledges is critical in implementing the Roadmap as well as in demonstrating a mutual commitment to the peace process.

We are monitoring the situation closely and have already begun to see some progress on the ground in these areas, including coordination on the opening of a number of Palestinian police stations in the West Bank. For our part, we are working with Quartet Special Representative Tony Blair, the EU, and other donors to coordinate efforts in support of the parties. We are focusing, in particular, on supporting efforts in Jenin, where Defense Minister Barak and Prime Minister Fayyad agreed during their March 30 meeting with Secretary Rice to work to improve the lives of the Palestinian

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people through better performance of the Palestinian security force, the easing of restrictions on movement and access, and international support for development projects and

economic growth. We are committed to the success of this effort in Jenin, which we hope can be subsequently replicated in other Palestinian cities.

Second, implementation of the Roadmap and achieving a two-state solution is a shared responsibility. As the Secretary General has said, the international community

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needs to support the efforts of the Israeli and Palestinian leadership. This process is too important to lose momentum. The commitment of the international community, especially in building Palestinian institutional capacity and supporting economic growth, remains vital to the success of this process.

The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) will meet in London on May 2 and there is an urgent need for donors to follow through on their generous pledges from the Paris Donors Conference. We would especially encourage members of the Arab League, in recognition of their special role in supporting this process, to provide robust political and financial support for the Palestinian Authority under President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad.

The Quartet will also meet on May 2 in London, and we look forward to a good discussion of how the process begun in Annapolis is unfolding, and how the international community can best support the parties' efforts both on the ground and in their bilateral negotiations.

Third, we are deeply concerned by continued terrorist attacks from Gaza into Israel and the threat they pose to the efforts of the parties to achieve the two-state solution to this conflict. The United States joins the Secretary General in condemning the recent terrorist

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attack that killed two Israeli civilians at the Nahal Oz fuel terminal and further condemns the simultaneous suicide attacks on Saturday at the Kissufim and Kerem Shalom crossings that wounded thirteen Israeli soldiers. Attacks like these demonstrate Hamas' focus on its own political agenda above the needs of the Palestinian people, as well as its continued reliance on violence and terror. We should not lose sight of the fact that the difficult situation in Gaza is the result of Hamas' violent seizure of power there in June. Hamas' recent terrorist attacks only exacerbate the plight of the Palestinian people by making it more difficult for the international community to deliver much needed humanitarian assistance and goods to the people of Gaza.

Mr. President, Israel has an unquestionable right to defend itself against terrorist attacks and we urge the Government of Israel when responding to attacks to take all possible steps to avoid civilian casualties and to minimize the impact on innocent civilians. The United States remains firmly committed to providing essential humanitarian assistance to help meet the basic needs of the people living in Gaza and we reiterate our call on Hamas to relinquish control of Gaza and return it to the

legitimate Palestinian Authority government.

Fourth, we share the international community's concerns about the hardships facing the Palestinian people. The United States, through its substantial financial contribution to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), has consistently demonstrated its support for humanitarian relief efforts for Palestinian refugees. To date in FY 2008, the United States has contributed more than \$148 million to UNRWA, which includes \$57 million for UNRWA's 2008 emergency appeal to support life-saving humanitarian assistance

for refugees in the West Bank and Gaza. The United States continues to work with the Government of Israel to help support the efforts of our partners in the international community to

provide essential humanitarian support to those living in Gaza. We strongly condemn terror attacks against the crossings which have killed innocent Israelis, prevent the delivery of essential goods and services, and do not serve the interests of the Palestinian people.

With regard to Lebanon, we are deeply troubled that, although the Lebanese seem to have reached consensus on a presidential candidate, a minority, backed by Syria and Iran, both state sponsors of terrorism, are using extra-constitutional preconditions to block the constitutionally-mandated presidential elections. The Lebanese parliament has been closed for over a year, and the presidency has been vacant for five months. It is long past time to reopen the parliament and elect a president. We condemn the on-going interference in Lebanese affairs by Iran and Syria, and express our deep concern about reports that both Iran and Syria are engaged in activities that violate UNSC resolutions 1559 and

[S/1701](#).

In addition, international support is critical to the success of the UN Special Tribunal for Lebanon. We urge all countries to support the integrity of the Tribunal, cooperate with it, and contribute to it financially. The Tribunal must pursue justice wherever its investigation leads. The United States has contributed \$14 million towards the Tribunal's start up and its first year of operations. We expect to remain a significant contributor for its duration. We urge those countries that have not yet contributed to do so and those that have made pledges to follow through quickly on providing those

funds. We thank those countries that have already contributed and ask them to advise the Secretary General of their intent to continue their support until the Tribunal completes its work.

RICE